PERPETUATING COLD WAR MYTHOLOGY?

Allen Weinstein, having built his career with partisan explotation of the tragedy of Alger Hiss, rushes into print to belittle the report that Russian intelligence files establish Hiss' innocence and make Whittaker Chambers out to be a self-promoting liar.

It is indecent for Weinstein to misrepresent as widely as he does in his "Reopening a Cold War Mystery" (Post 11/4/92), simultaneously again promoting himself and his alleged efforts to bring additional information to light. In this he raises substantial questions about how much the scholar he really is and whether or not, after all his work in the field, he today has any but a story-book knowledge of how intelligence agencies work.

Without disclosing his own partisanship Weinstein pretends that in two months no real Russian records search could have been made.

One of bis bases for not beliving the official report is that, "To date, no documents have been released by the general (who wrote Hiss that there are no such records!) to support his assertions."

In this Weinstein presumes that relevant records do exist when the official statement is that none exist.

So, in the Weinstein concept of thinking and proof, if no records are disclosed, the Russian generals are lying!

How can non-existing records be "released" to satisfy those who like Weinstein have built careers on the presumption of their existence?

Any search to determine whether or not Hiss had been a Soviet agent is, from, for example, FBI practise, relatively simple and fast. And all intelligence agencies have similar needs for carefulness. They do not permit their intelligence officers to make agents of others on whim or without control and approval. These procedures are proper and necessary and they do generate records that can be retrieved almost instantly-if they exist.

If an FBI agent wants to make an informer of someone he first must have the approval of the field office in which he works. If he gets that approval, the entire matter is referred to headquarters. If headquarters likes the idea it grants probationary approval,

to be evaluated after six ~~mo~~ months of probation. Meanwhile, the intended agent is indentified by a unique and arbitrary symbol. The intelligence officer reports all contacts and whether or not they were productive on a prescribed form on which both this arbitrary symbol and the also unique file number are posted. The nature of the information provided is indicated in the symbol and in the file number. Political or "security" information is represented with the letter "S", criminal with the letter "C", etc., following the symbol identification.

The files in which all contact records are filed are 134 for "Security Informants," 137 for "Criminal Informants", etc. At the field office and at headquarters the indices reflect immediately whether or not there are such files.

Either way, the answer is definitive.

So, if Weinstein wants to allege that the general who heads the Russian Foreign Intelligence Agency is a liar or made an inadquate search, or if he believes that the general who is both a historian and the head of the Russian parliamentary archives commission lied about the records he was given or about their content, he should say so and be prepared to offer some reasons in support of his allegations.

But to rest a case on the alleged failure to produce documents when they do not ~~dist~~ exist raised questions of competence, honesty or both.

That Weinstein's purposes center on exploitation and self-promotion is ~~dis~~ disclosed in his reporting of his demand for the disclosures of the "Files on Lee Harvey Oswald as a defector in the Soviet Union." Actually, Oswald did not defect. (and the proper request was made earlier by others, including me.) Weinstein presumes the existence of files in accord with his political preconceptions, not quite the same as ~~scho~~ scholarship, rather than what the available official information indicates they are.

~~And~~ It is to wonder how much Weinstein really learned about files, withholdings and disclosures from his own uses of the Freedom of Information Act (other than perhaps as a favored person by the agencies ~~of~~ of which he made requests) when he can actually say that the CIA's "release" of all "its records on Oswald and the Kennedy assassination... now approaches completion after passage of the recent congressional statute" when in fact that process has not yet begun, is much more complicated and subject ~~gre~~ to delay

because of the provisions of that statute and ~~then~~ the additional limitations imposed by President Bush.

Not having Hiss to kick around any more Weinstein is preparing to kick the dead Oswald around. Weinstein has kept himself ignorant of the available official information although knowledge of it is essential in authentic scholarship.

He may think he ~~is~~ will, with this Oswald exploitation, be "Reopening a Cold War Mystery" but it is no mystery at all ~~that~~ Oswald was virulently anti-USSR and anti-American ~~CPP~~ CP and that does not qualify for being another "cold War Mystery."

Not having Hiss to kick around any more did not keep Weinstein from doing that again but the various bases he contrived are phony, like "no documents have been released" proving ~~that~~ that there are documents to be released.

Weinstein promoted ~~hisem~~ himself and his coming projects but he did not inform the Post's readers. He misled and misinformed them.

But as long as the Weinsteins of the world regard hiding ~~not acknowledging even the possibility of~~ their career- building errors as more important than truth there will be neither truth nor justice for the victims of the political paranoia of the past and the efforts to perpetuate the misinformation of the past will not end.

It is not good for the country.

And it certainly is not scholarship.

Harold Weisberg